



Name of meeting: Personnel Committee

Date: 25th April 2018

Title of report: Sickness Absence Update

Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Is it in the Council's Forward Plan ?	No
Is it eligible for "call in" by Scrutiny ?	No
Date signed off by <u>Director</u> & name Is it signed off by the Director of Resources? Is it signed off by the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning (monitoring Officer)?	Jacqui Gedman , Chief Executive 16 th April 2018 Julie Muscroft 17 th April 2018
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr David Sheard, Leader of the Council, Cllr Shabir Pandor, Deputy leader of the Council

Electoral [wards](#) affected: N/A

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To receive an update from the Head of People Services on current levels of sickness absence and proposals for improving attendance going forward.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's sickness absence target for 2017/18 was set at 10 days per employee, reducing to 9 days per employee for 2018/19.
- 2.2 Since July 2017, the level of sickness absence has been steadily increasing with the current average number of days lost per employee at 12.2 days. Levels of absence vary across directorates with the highest level reported in Adults (14.5 days) and the lowest level reported in Corporate Service (9.2 days).
- 2.3 The main reasons for absence relate to stress, mental ill-health and musculoskeletal conditions and at present, there are 100 cases of ill-health that have continued beyond 3 months.
- 2.4 At a national level, the CIPD's Absence Management Survey published in 2017 reported that the average number of days lost to sickness absence across the public sector was 8.5 days. Stress, mental ill-health and musculoskeletal conditions were the main causes of sickness, with over half of the public sector reporting an increase in stress related absences and two-thirds reporting an increase in mental ill-health.
- 2.5 Therefore, whilst our absence levels are higher than the national average for the public sector, the reasons for those absences are reflective of the national trend in the public sector.

3. Approach to date

- 3.1 In order to support managers to address increasing sickness absence levels, a number of measures have been put in place across the Council; these include:
- Providing on-line absence management training via the MiPod system;
 - Developing an on-line health referral form to simplify and speed up the referral process;
 - Delivering bespoke absence management workshops for managers in Adults and Children's Services;
 - Providing managers with access to management information, including automatic notifications when employees remain absent for 8, 29 and 57 calendar days, setting out what actions are required;
 - Offering mentoring, coaching and mediation interventions.

- 3.2 In addition, a forum of Mental Health Champions has recently been established to provide support to the workforce and we have also developed a 'Reasonable Adjustment Passport' which supports employees as they move into new roles across the authority.
- 3.3 Whilst the approach to date has been valuable, sickness absence continues to rise and we therefore need to review and radically change we manage attendance; we need to shift to an approach that focuses on prevention and positive intervention and on improving the health and wellbeing of our workforce, with the aim of minimising time spent reacting to sickness absence.

4. Improving the Health and Wellbeing of our Workforce

- 4.1 A key theme of our [People Strategy](#) is cultural change, with a focus on 'Wellbeing'. This provides us with a real opportunity to transform the way in which we approach sickness absence; moving away from traditional methods of managing attendance and replacing these with a strength based approach, investing in improving the health and wellbeing of our workforce.
- 4.2 This approach is critical and research shows that healthy and well-motivated employees have a positive impact on the productivity and effectiveness of services. A healthy workplace and a healthy workforce can help to:
- reduce levels of ill health and injuries within an organisation;
 - reduce the incidence and duration of absence through enabling workers to return to work more quickly;
 - improve levels of work satisfaction and employee morale;
 - improve staff retention and lower employee turnover;
 - improve the effective and efficient delivery of services;
 - create a culture where the workforce is more resilient and responds positively to organisational change and development.
- 4.3 Therefore, as part of the Wellbeing work stream of the People Strategy, a Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be developed. A key element of this strategy will be to encourage and support our employees to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. The strategy will provide the foundation for us to lead as an exemplar both in supporting our own workforce and in clearly addressing key health and wellbeing matters that affect the Kirklees community as a whole. Many of our employees are also residents; therefore, understanding and being supported to develop healthy lifestyles will help staff promote these to others, whether in their role as service providers or as residents.
- 4.4 The strategy will be co-produced, working with public health and medical colleagues and will be informed by business intelligence. Once developed, the strategy will be brought to life by an action plan, which will have clear timescales and outcomes. It is anticipated that the

strategy will be completed by 31st July 2018.

- 4.5 Integral to the success of our Wellbeing Strategy, will be the transformation of our Employee Health Care offer. Historically, this service has been engaged in the management of absence on a reactive basis. This service is a valuable asset and an untapped resource. Going forward, the service needs to be proactive, engaging and at the heart of providing cutting-edge solutions to improving the wellbeing of our workforce. In this respect, it is proposed that there is a fundamental review of the service to ensure that it is fit for purpose and delivering the best outcomes for Kirklees.
- 4.6 In addition to the above, it is critical that as an organisation, we produce robust business intelligence that is monitored and challenged appropriately at all levels in the organisation. In terms of workforce intelligence, measures have already been put in place for the Executive Team to receive a holistic overview of key workforce data on a monthly basis. This data covers key areas such as resourcing, wellbeing and talent development and not only provides the leadership team with visibility of key workforce data but more importantly, enables challenge at a senior level. A drill down of this data will be produced at a directorate level and shared with appropriate SLT's to enable further challenge.
- 4.7 In terms of engagement with councillors, the next steps will be to present this key workforce data to elected members on a regular basis; this will include regular reports to Personnel Committee and will ensure that members are sighted on workforce intelligence and have the opportunity to challenge and support at the highest level.
- 4.8 On a final point, it is essential that the policies and processes that underpin our wellbeing agenda are clear and concise and well communicated so that staff fully understand them and managers are confident in applying them so that the workforce is fully supported and managers have the tools to effectively manage absence. In this respect, as part of the People Strategy, a review will be undertaken of the key policies and process relating to health and wellbeing and improvements will be made.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Taking a proactive approach to improving the health and wellbeing of our workforce, coupled with a framework of clear systems and processes that are communicated, monitored and challenged at all levels in the organisation will ensure that going forward, managers will have the tools not only to support staff but also to tackle high levels of sickness absence.
- 5.2 This holistic approach will ensure that we create a climate within which we will improve the health and wellbeing of our workforce and in turn,

improve levels of attendance.

6. Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation

6.1 There is no specific Portfolio Holder recommendation

7. Officer recommendation

7.1 The Personnel Committee is recommended to note the content of this report and support the development of a Workforce Health and Wellbeing Strategy going forward.

8. Contact officer

Jacqui Gedman, Chief Executive

9. Service Director responsible

Deborah Lucas, Head of People Service